

**STANDING ORDERS
OF THE ASSEMBLY**

*Adopted at the 10th Assembly
of the Conference of European Churches
on the 8th September 1992*

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

STANDING ORDERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

1. Convening and Agenda

1.1 The Central Committee shall convene the Assembly no later than eighteen months before the date fixed.

1.2 The invitation shall specify the date, place and expected duration of the meeting, as well as the quotas laid down by the Central Committee for delegates from member churches.

1.3 The invitation shall also contain recommendations for the composition of each delegation in accordance with § 7(2) of the Bye-laws.

1.4 The Central Committee shall draft the agenda for ordinary meetings of the Assembly. It shall be sent to the member churches of the Conference no later than six months before the beginning of the Assembly and shall as far as possible contain a brief explanation of the individual items to be discussed.

1.5 Delegates may submit supplementary proposals and amendments to the General Secretary in writing until four weeks before the beginning of the session at the latest.

1.6 If an extraordinary meeting of the Assembly is requested in accordance with Article 5(5) of the Constitution, the meeting must be convened within six months.

1.7 Should the request call for the inclusion of specific items on the agenda, this should be granted.

1.8 In the case of an extraordinary meeting the provision in No. 1.4 may be waived.

1.9 The agenda shall be approved by the Assembly at its first business session. Proposals for amendments may be accepted at this session.

2. Nature of the Assembly

2.1 The Assembly may meet either in general session or in business session.

2.2 The Assembly shall meet in general session for acts of worship, ceremonies and official addresses. A quorum is not required for a general session.

2.3 The Assembly shall meet in business session to carry out the functions enumerated in Article 5(3) of the Constitution or to take any other decisions relevant to the agenda.

2.4 In the absence of any explicit provision to the contrary, the present Standing Orders shall apply to business sessions only.

2.5 The Moderator¹ shall on each occasion announce whether the Assembly is meeting in general or in business session.

¹ For greater clarity of style only the masculine form of the various posts is used hereinafter, but it goes without saying that any of these posts may be filled by a woman or a man.

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2.6 The Assembly may decide to meet in closed business session at times. Only members of the Assembly shall be present, unless the Assembly formally admits other persons.

3. Participation and right to speak

3.1 The following persons shall participate in the Assembly:

(a) delegates of the member churches and members of the Central Committee in accordance with § 5(2) of the Constitution and § 7 of the Bye-laws (hereinafter called "members of the Assembly");

(b) the staff of the General Secretariat of the Conference without the right to speak or vote, unless otherwise provided;

(c) fraternal delegates in accordance with § 7(6)2 of the Bye-laws, advisers, observers and other persons with the right to speak in accordance with No. 3.3;

(d) guests without the right to speak or vote.

3.2 Participants in the Assembly with the right to speak are entitled to speak once on each item on the agenda. With the agreement of the two Deputy Moderators, the Moderator may permit exceptions. The General Secretary and the executive staff in the General Secretariat of the Conference may likewise be authorised to speak.

3.3 The Moderator may invite persons participating in the Assembly under No. 3.1(c) to speak.

3.4 All speakers shall address the Moderator.

3.5 The Moderator may limit the time accorded to speakers. Expiry of the allotted time must be announced one minute in advance.

4. Constitution of the Assembly

4.1 The Chairman of the Central Committee shall open the Assembly, shall determine whether it has been convened and has met in accordance with the prescribed procedure, and shall conduct the Assembly until the Moderator and the two Deputy Moderators of the Assembly have been elected.

4.2 On the proposal of the Chairman of the Central Committee the Assembly shall first elect at least two tellers.

4.3 On the proposal of the Central Committee, the Assembly shall at its first session elect a Credentials Committee composed of five members of the Assembly. This Committee shall appoint its own officers.

4.4 The Credentials Committee shall verify:

(a) whether the delegates present at the Assembly have been duly appointed by their member churches in accordance with § 7 of the Bye-laws;

(b) which members of the Central Committee are present at the Assembly;

(c) which advisers, observers and, if appropriate, other persons present shall be entitled to speak during the Assembly.

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4.5. The Credentials Committee shall submit its findings to the Assembly on the second day of the meeting at the latest and shall establish whether the Assembly has a quorum and how many votes are required to obtain a simple and a two thirds majority - subject, if necessary, to verification at individual plenary sessions.

4.6 The Assembly has a quorum if in total more than half the number of delegates, as laid down in § 7(1) of the Bye-laws, and of the members of the Central Committee are present.

4.7 The Credentials Committee shall ensure that the members of the Assembly who are entitled to vote receive their voting cards.

4.8 The Chairman of the Central Committee shall submit to the Assembly the Central Committee's proposals for the election of the Moderator and the two Deputy Moderators of the Assembly. The candidates must be members of the Assembly. One of the two Deputy Moderators may be a member of the Central Committee.

4.9 Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor of the Assembly for the above-mentioned posts, if seconded by at least five members of the Assembly.

5. Duties of the Moderator

5.1 The Moderator shall conduct the sessions of the Assembly, and in particular shall fulfil the following duties:

- (a) ensure the orderly and fair conduct of the debates;
- (b) open, suspend and close the sessions;
- (c) establish that a quorum is attained;
- (d) open and close the debate on each item on the agenda and determine the order of speakers;
- (e) call on speakers and rule them out of order, and be empowered to limit the time accorded to them;
- (f) determine the sequence of elections and votes and announce the results.

5.2 With the exception of announcing the results of elections, votes and decisions "on points of order" (see Nos. 6.9, 6.14 and 7.12), the decisions of the Moderator are final.

5.3 The Moderator may table a motion or take part in the debate, but must first leave the Chair, and may take the Chair again only after a decision has been reached on the subject under discussion.

5.4 The Moderator's place in the conduct of the meeting shall be taken by one of the two Deputy Moderators. In each case the Moderator shall determine which of the two shall take the Chair.

5.5 To ensure that the Standing Orders are respected the Moderator may be assisted by two advisers on procedural matters. They shall be nominated by him and elected by the Assembly.

6. Debates and Decisions

6.1 The Moderator shall allow debate on each item on the agenda.

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6.2 Motions may be tabled by any member of the Assembly. Each motion must be seconded by at least one other member of the Assembly.

6.3 All motions regarding the agenda must be submitted to the Moderator in writing together with the name of the proposer and his church affiliation. The motion must be read out before the relevant vote is taken.

6.4 Amendments may be tabled under the same conditions.

6.5 At the start of the debate the proposer of a motion shall explain the grounds for so moving, and shall have the right to speak to the motion again at the end of the debate.

6.6 The Moderator shall ensure that it is clearly understood which motion or amendment is being debated at any given time.

6.7 Anyone wishing to speak to the agenda shall in due time submit to the Moderator of the Assembly a card with his or her name, church affiliation and an indication of the subject to be raised.

6.8 A member of the Assembly may at any time move closure of the debate on an item of the agenda, on a particular motion or an amendment, provided that this does not interrupt another speaker. The Moderator shall have discretion to decide when to allow such a motion to be put to the vote.

6.9 The motion to close the debate shall be put to the vote without discussion. If it is carried by two thirds of the members of the Assembly present, the motion on (or amendment to) the agenda before the house shall be put to the vote immediately without further debate.

6.10 A member of the Assembly may at any time raise a question relating to a "point of order" if he considers that the Standing Orders are not being respected. The Moderator shall rule on the matter.

If the ruling is called in question the Assembly shall vote on whether the Standing Orders have been respected or not.

6.11 A member of the Assembly may at any time raise a point of procedure and ask the Moderator to clarify the subject under discussion.

6.12 Persons requesting the floor under Nos. 6.8 to 6.11 and 6.16 shall raise both hands.

6.13 Each member of the Assembly shall have one vote. The Moderator and the two Deputy Moderators shall likewise have the right to vote.

6.14 Votes shall normally be cast by displaying coloured voting cards. If at least three members of the Assembly request for a secret written ballot, this request must be granted.

6.15 Motions shall be carried by a simple majority of the members of the Assembly present and voting, except where a qualified majority is required by the Constitution, the Bye-laws or the present Standing Orders. In the event of a tied vote the motion shall be considered as rejected. Abstentions shall not affect the result of the vote.

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6.16 Should the Moderator's announcement of the result of a vote be called in question by a member of the Assembly, a vote must be taken immediately on whether the vote on the issue concerned should be repeated.

7. Elections

7.1 Subject to § 5 of the Bye-laws, and on the basis of a proposal from the Central Committee, the Assembly shall at one of its first sessions elect from among its members 11 persons to sit on a Nominations Committee. The Nominations Committee shall elect from among its members a chairman, a vice-chairman and a secretary. In reaching its decisions the Nominations Committee shall not be bound by any proposals or recommendations whatsoever.

7.2 The Nominations Committee shall make proposals to the Assembly regarding the election of the members of the following committees:

- (a) the Central Committee, subject to the terms of § 8(2)1 of the Bye-laws;
- (b) the Policy Reference Committee of the Assembly;
- (c) the Finance Committee of the Assembly;
- (d) additional committees of the Assembly in accordance with No. 8.12.

Members of the Assembly shall be eligible for election to the committees listed under (b) to (d).

7.3 In making its proposals the Nominations Committee shall respect the provisions of § 5 of the Bye-laws and shall ensure - in so far as the composition of the Assembly permits - that at least 40% of the candidates are women, at least 40% are men and at least 20% are under 30 years of age. Proposals may not include the names of members of the Nominations Committee.

7.4 At the same time as the election of the Nominations Committee the Assembly shall, on the proposal of the Central Committee, decide on the number of members of the committees to be elected, unless this has already been determined.

7.5 The Nominations Committee shall submit to the Assembly a list for each committee to be elected containing as many names as the committee concerned should have members. The criteria listed in § 5 of the Bye-laws shall be mentioned alongside the names.

7.6 Alternative candidates to the individual persons on the list drawn up by the Nominations Committee may be proposed in writing by members of the Assembly within two hours, or in the case of elections to the Central Committee within 24 hours after submission of the said list by the Nominations Committee. These proposals must be signed by at least ten members of the Assembly. The alternative candidates must be of the same denomination and come from the same region of Europe as the candidates whose nomination is challenged.

7.7 The Moderator of the Assembly shall announce whether the persons proposed are eligible and willing to stand as candidates.

7.8 The Assembly shall first decide in each individual case by open vote whether the person proposed by the Nominations Committee should remain on the list of candidates or whether the alternative candidate nominated from the floor of the Assembly should be placed on the list instead.

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7.9 After the list proposed by the Nominations Committee has been modified or confirmed in this way, it will be put to the vote as a whole in accordance with § 6 of the Bye-laws. If more than half the votes cast are affirmative, all the persons on the list of candidates are elected.

In the event of a secret written ballot it must be possible to vote "yes" or "no" by making a cross on the ballot paper. Ballot papers on which no cross is made shall be considered as abstentions. Ballot papers which contain comments shall be invalid.

7.10 If the list of candidates as a whole does not obtain the necessary majority a separate vote shall be taken for each person on it. Persons who obtain more than half the valid votes cast are elected.

In the event of a secret written ballot each member of the Assembly shall make one single cross beside the name of each of the candidates he or she supports. Ballot papers on which more than one cross has been made against the same name, or on which names have been added, or which contain comments, shall be invalid. Ballot papers on which no cross has been made against any name shall be regarded as abstentions.

7.11 In place of the persons not elected the Nominations Committee shall, in accordance with No. 7.3, draw up a new list of candidates which must contain different names. The procedure set out in Nos. 7.5 to 7.10, etc. shall then be followed until the allotted number of members for the committee concerned has been elected.

7.12 After each secret written ballot the Moderator of the Assembly shall announce the number of valid and invalid votes cast and the number of positive and negative votes either for the list of candidates as a whole or for each individual candidate. Where appropriate, he shall also announce the number of abstentions.

7.13 When the election of a committee has been concluded the Moderator of the Assembly shall ask the persons elected altogether, present at the session, if they accept their election. If no objection is raised he shall state that the said committee has been elected.

7.14 The Nominations Committee is responsible for all other nominations for elections in the Assembly unless the Bye-laws or the present Standing Orders provide otherwise or the Steering Committee decides differently in individual cases.

8. Committees of the Assembly

8.1 In addition to the Credentials and Nominations Committees, at least the following committees shall function during every ordinary session of the Assembly:

- (a) the Steering Committee;
- (b) the Finance Committee;
- (c) the Policy Reference Committee.

8.2 The Moderator and Deputy Moderators of the Assembly, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee, of the Planning Committee and of the Local Preparatory Committee for the Assembly, together with the General Secretary and the two advisers on procedural questions, shall constitute the Steering Committee for the duration of the Assembly.

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8.3 The Steering Committee shall assist the Moderator in the conduct of the Assembly. Statements and recommendations to the member churches under Article 5(3)5 of the Constitution should be submitted to it in writing no later than 24 hours before the vote is taken. The Steering Committee shall inform the Assembly of these as rapidly as possible.

8.4 For the duration of its meeting the Assembly shall elect 15 of its members who, together with the Budget Committee of the Central Committee, shall constitute the Finance Committee of the Assembly.

8.5 The Finance Committee shall discuss the financial situation of the Conference and shall submit a draft financial plan to the Assembly in accordance with Article 5(3)4 of the Constitution. The draft must be submitted to the Assembly at least 24 hours before the adoption of the relevant decision.

8.6 The Assembly shall elect 20 of its members to the Policy Reference Committee.

8.7 The Policy Reference Committee shall discuss the reports of the Central Committee and the General Secretary. Unless a special committee is set up for the purpose, the Committee shall also discuss, where appropriate, a general theme selected by the Central Committee in accordance with Article 5(3)1 of the Constitution and, where appropriate, drafts of statements by the Conference and recommendations to the member churches in accordance with Article 5(3)5 of the Constitution.

8.8 The Steering Committee may set up working groups or sections to prepare or assist the committee responsible for the discussion of a general theme. They shall be open to members of the Assembly, to the categories of persons listed in No. 3.1(c) and other categories of participants determined by the Central Committee.

8.9 The Policy Reference Committee shall submit proposals to the Assembly for the future work of the Conference. It shall present proposals to the Assembly regarding instructions falling under Article 5(3)3 of the Constitution.

8.10 The Policy Reference Committee shall where appropriate discuss proposed amendments to the Bye-laws to the Constitution or the Standing Orders of the Assembly, unless a special committee is set up for the purpose.

8.11 The Policy Reference Committee shall submit its proposals to the Assembly at least 24 hours before the relevant vote.

8.12 The Assembly may establish other committees to organise special events for the community (ceremonies, prayers, cultural events etc.) and to deal with items on the agenda. All proposed decisions must be submitted to the Assembly at least twenty-four hours in advance.

8.13 With the exception of the working groups or sections referred to in No. 8.8 the Assembly committees shall appoint their own officers.

8.14 The members of the Steering Committee shall be entitled to participate in an advisory capacity in meetings of the Finance Committee, the Policy Reference Committee and other committees set up by the Assembly under the terms of No. 8.12.

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8.15 The Assembly committees referred to in Nos. 8.2 to 8.12 may resolve to invite individual advisers, observers and other persons with the right to speak in the Assembly, in accordance with No. 3.1, to attend their meetings in an advisory capacity and to call on staff from the General Secretariat with the consent of the General Secretary to assist them in their work.

8.16 The Credentials and Nominations Committees may request the General Secretary to take part from time to time in their meetings in an advisory capacity.

9. Secretariat and Minutes

9.1 The General Secretary shall be responsible for the minuting of the Assembly proceedings.

9.2 Immediately after the end of the Assembly, he shall issue the text of the decisions, statements and recommendations of the Assembly, as well as the election results. These texts shall be signed by the Moderator and shall be sent to the member churches of the Conference and the members of the Assembly.

9.3 The General Secretary shall compile the report of the Assembly proceeding containing the substance of the debates on the various items on the agenda, and shall send it to the same categories of recipients.